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ORAL HISTORY TRANSCRIPT

Prof. Karl Gunnar Myrdal

Main points covered in the interview

Nehru's democratic attitude; Myrdal's advise to Nehru to limit his dealings with all and sundry; assessment of Nehru's greatness and comparison with Goethe; Nehru, Mahalonobis and the Second Five Year Plan; Myrdal's estimation of the Indian bureaucracy; Nehru and the civil service; his role in developing Parliamentarianism in India; Nehru's apathy to deal with corruption.

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SIG. Sd/- Gunnar Myrdal

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FOREWORD

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Prof. Karl Gunnar Myrdal (interviewee), recorded by Shri B.R. Nanda (interviewer), date, page, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Oral History Project.

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Bio-data

Myrdal, Karl Gunnar B. 6 Dec. 1898; educ. Stockholm; internationally known economist and sociologist; Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (1947-57); Professor of International Economics at the University of Stockholm and Director of the Swedish Institute for International Economic Studies; visited India.

Publications include among many others An International Economy (1956), Beyond the Welfare State (1960), Challenge to Affluence (1963), Asian Drama (1968) and Critical Essays on Economics (1973).

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Oral History Interview
with
Prof. Karl Gunnar Myrdal
New Delhi, India
January 20, 1974
by
Shri B.R. Nanda
for The Nehru Memorial Museum & Library

B.R. Nanda: Prof. Myrdal, I am grateful to you for agreeing to speak to us for our Oral History Project. You had the privilege of seeing a good deal of Pandit Nehru at close quarters when you were in India about fifteen years ago. Could you recall for me your first meeting with him?

Karl Gunnar Myrdal: Let me first give you the general background. In 1955, we two (my wife and I) decided privately, that we were now prepared to leave our positions with the U.N. and that we wanted to go to South Asia, not necessarily India. I wanted to work on that project, which later, after much labour, came out as Asian Drama. Alva was in UNESCO, and I was heading the Economic Commission for Europe, and there we thought we had done our part in this international work and would now go somewhere else. Alva wrote home as they had wanted her for a number of things, but she had had desire to serve in a poor part of the world, and preferably South Asia. She got a telephone call offering her the ambassadorship to India.

Nanda: Telephone from whom?

Myrdal: From the Foreign Minister in Sweden and she was called to go almost straightaway

as an Ambassador to India. That was in 1955.

Mrs. Alva Myrdal: We made the agreement between ourselves in May.

Myrdal: Yes, in May that we should go out there. Then I had occasion that autumn to visit India, as I had done before several times in my official capacity with the United Nations. But I came here to work on my scientific task first late in 1957 and stayed till the summer of 1960. During my earlier visits, I do not recall that I saw Mr. Nehru, but I saw him very often during that period from 1957 to 1960, in all the parties you have here, and he was very near my wife, as you know. So, I came in contact with him. You said also that I flatter myself of being a scholar. You know every seventh rate scholar from Europe or America was at that time speaking in Sapru House and advising the Planning Commission! Well, I knew my friends in the Planning Commission. We met socially, but I was not here to give advice, and I made only one speech and that was because Mr. Nehru asked me. You know, none of us could ever resist when he asked you for something. So, I was speaking to the two Houses of Parliament. The speech was published even though I did not expect it.

Nanda: You have quoted in your book.

Myrdal: Yes, during that time I remember once - this might have been my fifth or tenth meeting - Mr. Nehru, when he said: "Shouldn't you come and advise me?"

And I said: "I have more important things to do. I am working on a book. And you should have more important things to do than to listen to me. You should run this country." And then he laughed and that was that. I remember, once I was walking on a street here (in New Delhi) with Mr. Nehru, and he told me that he was going to the High Command - what do you call that committee?

Nanda: Congress High Command.

Myrdal: Congress High Command, and he had a very important proposal to make. I have forgotten now what it was, but it was a very important thing for him. And then he suddenly turned his head to me and said: "You understand I have not talked to anybody." And I said: "My friend, haven't you prepared these important matters, so that you get your will through?" Then I saw a sign, a characteristic of Nehru, that he was really a democrat in a very fundamental, perhaps you can say, foolish way. He did want this thing to go through that committee, but without him pressing for it. This is a real sort of democratic attitude, but one which I think is rather unpractical for a Prime Minister in a very difficult country. That is an episode which I remember. And then another episode ...

Nanda: You mean he was very much wanting to see that thing through?

Myrdal: That is right.

Nanda: But was not prepared to canvass

for it in advance?

Myrdal: No. It should go through because it was right. And if it did not go through though it was right, even then he would be satisfied. You know that from the history here in India, that in so many situations he did not press his will.

Nanda: But he also thought it was wrong to canvass and to bias people in advance.

Myrdal: That is right. That is one episode which stands out very clearly in my mind and which, to an extent, can tell you something about Mr. Nehru's personality. When I had to leave-and this was for the book I later wrote in Stockholm. I worked hard for many, many years - Alva said to me: "You must go and say good-bye to Mr. Nehru," and I said: "Certainly." And I got an appointment with him in his room in Parliament. I came there and I was trying to speak a little to the Chaprasi, the man who sat outside his door. Then I went in. At that moment Nehru was in this mood which you so well remember, when he could be very absent-minded and almost look out through the window. I mean that happened now and then, you know, that he had that mood, and our conversation started by my saying: "I had an interesting conversation with the Chaprasi who sits outside your door." "He is," I said, "of course, much more of a mystery to me than you are." And then Nehru really became lively and said: "You mean that he is more interesting to you than me?" "Sure," I said, "you are making four speeches

everyday; you have written big books; to me as a scholar you are open as a book. There are no secrets about you, but what I do not understand is, what goes on in the mind of that man who sits outside your door," and we discussed that.

Then Nehru smiled and said: "And now, finally, you will give me your advice." Then I said: "Well," and I agreed. "None of us know," I remember I said, "when we shall die, but make up your mind, that you are prepared to stay on ten years more as Prime Minister of India, and then you should really run the country, which means that you must economise and order your priorities." "You have asked me for advice," I said, "and now I am telling you frankly, then you should economise with yourself."

"For instance," I said, "you should stop making all these speeches. Leave that to Radhakrishnan. He makes almost as good speeches as you." Then Nehru smiled. There was a little element of irony; he smiled, and then I continued: "You should not dictate letters to all sorts of unimportant persons. This has nothing to do with the running of India. When I send you a book, I know that almost next day or within a few days I will get a letter which you have dictated. That I know, because I know your style from your books and from your speeches. That you should not do. Even if it is very nice for me to get your personal criticism, this should be done away with. You should have no trouble with such

things."

This happened when Eisenhower was making a visit here, if you remember, and I read in the newspapers how the Delhi Corporation had come up to Mr. Nehru and asked his advice about what gift they should give to Eisenhower, and so I said, "Then you should have kicked them out and said: "Some responsibilities you must take on yourself. You should not disturb me for such things.'" And I said: "You should stop seeing all these unimportant foreign people who really should have no right to see you. Anybody who comes here has the possibility to come to the Planning Commission and also to see you personally, and I think there you should be very much more economic.

Then you should run this big country, really govern it, and in order to do that, you should have something like the French cabinet, a number of devoted people who could be your eyes, your ears and your hands, helping to run this country. And you should have a government of ministers which are not only selected for being representative of various regions and various opinions; there should be a government which, together with you, has a firm policy and you should dictate that policy."

And so I went on with my advice. And then Nehru smiled, almost laughed, and said: "Do you think I will follow your advice?" And then I said: "I am sure you will not follow my advice." Then

we talked about various personal things. I think this little interview is interesting.

Nehru was not ignorant of what we now can, perhaps, see as weaknesses, I mean, that he did not take a firm hand enough and did not often press his own will, which I think would have been good for India. I mean that this we can put up as a criticism of a man whom we admire very much. I might tell you that my wife and I, we used to some time, before dinner, walk on the streets around the little house which Alva had at that time as a residence and we used to talk about Nehru, trying to understand him. He was obviously a very great man. I have met many great men in my life. I have known seven Presidents in America, and so on. We could not find anybody who would be parallel to Nehru. You know when you talk about people, you think he was not like Roosevelt, he was not like anybody in the whole world history. Then the nearest we came to discussing him as a personality was, when Alva said: "I do believe the nearest - and that is not very near - is Goethe." Goethe also had a natural-science basis for his thinking, but very broadly encompassed almost all human interests and problems.

Of course, Mr. Nehru was a lovable person, I mean that is the feeling I have. He was a person who obviously gave himself time for lot of things which the Prime Minister of India should not give time for, when there are so many problems which he should

have entered upon more forcefully. That is what I would like to say about Mr. Nehru.

He is, to me, quite a unique accident in history; on the whole, I think very much to the good of India and the world. He was depressed, of course, when the Chinese war came. This is a long story. I have no personal memories of that. We did not talk about it when we met. He was quite a unique person and, perhaps, he was correct when he spent so much time on giving speeches to masses of people, almost as if he wanted all the many hundreds of millions of Indians to be small Mr. Nehrus in their ideals. Perhaps, we have not seen the end of history yet. That investment, he gave, was a sort of idealistic adult education. Perhaps, that was a great contribution, more than sometimes outside sceptical observers like me, who were thinking about everything which went wrong in India and which he did not catch up with while he was speaking so often and loud, could fathom. Perhaps, this was a right investment; only history will tell.

Nanda: Prof. Myrdal, do you think that Mr. Nehru did not accept your advice because he just could not accept it; he was so used to making speeches and writing letters? Or did he think it was in the interest of the kind of society and state he preferred India to be?

Myrdal: Well, this is, of course, pure speculation because I do not know what went on on

that particular point in Nehru's mind. I would say two things as I experienced Mr. Nehru. He was a type of upper-class democrat who did not want to press his opinions upon people. He wanted to explain what he meant, argue them. Then he was too open, in my opinion, to take a compromise and that was not because he was a compromiser. No, it was because he was this elevated democrat. What he believed, I think, when talking and talking all the time - and you know he spoke extempore most of the time, but very well, and it came in all the newspapers, and so on - was that it had a big educational effect. Here he had taken over a country which had no experience of running itself, or very little I would say, and to change the Indian people to believe they could, that was a very important thing. Then, of course, that does not explain everything; for instance, why should he devote time to read a book of mine, think about it and then write a long letter and dictate it himself? But there you have Nehru as this very broad intellectual, like Goethe. That is why we said he is like Goethe, who was really fascinated with all these things, which meant much to him. This is my explanation and then, of course, you know the old saying, which he probably thought too: that you cannot teach an old dog to sit. I mean after all he had his personality, had his routine, and, perhaps, he was not prepared to change it. I mean we are all, when we come to that age, prisoners of our own conception of how we live and work, and it is not so easy for anyone of us to change. I was very frank

at that time. I did not expect that he should take me seriously, but at least my advice was on, what I consider, a fundamental issue. It was not on these petty things.

And then Nehru, of course, had a queer belief in the general ideas. You know he was, in many ways, a very effective Chairman of the Planning Commission, and we all know that when he had the whole thing under him, he went up and dictated the fundamental things. To him, fundamental things meant equality and fighting poverty, which are usually in the introduction to the Plans. He believed in these general ideals and the importance to press them, even if he could not carry them out immediately. I think he had this long-term view and, as I said, history will show whether and how much of that was essential and right.

I think Gandhi was a different person because he went to the particular question. It was not only that he gave general advice, and sometimes it was very general, but then he had specific ideas about sanitation, about health, and so many things, and that ~~was~~ was in a particular situation. He was in a village, and saw something wrong and then he took it into his own hands. I have been studying Gandhi rather carefully, and I find, that you have to sort out his statements on specific issues to come to the general things. But Nehru was a generalising intellectual, who started with broad views and, perhaps, did not always think through, except occasionally, how it should be implemented in practical policies. There he was less insistent.

While we can all speculate about that great man, you have materials here - his letters and his speeches and all the books, everything which has been written about him - so you will be able to, perhaps in time, together with all the scholars, really get to Nehru's personality. The books about Nehru which I have read, some of them, uptill that time - you know there was an American who wrote a book, our friend the journalist...

Mrs. Alva Myrdal: Tibor Mende.

Myrdal: He has written one about him, and there is another journalist, he is an Indian.

Mrs. Alva Myrdal: Frank Moraes.

Myrdal: Frank Moraes, he has written a book - I think most of these books are not without value. I think there are things in them, which are very correct, but I do not think as yet that we have got a full picture of the man and that is what you are working on, as I understand. Even we people who have just been on the margin, like my wife and me, have been asked about how we experienced that great man.

Nanda: When you came to India about that time, the Planning Commission was in existence.

Myrdal: When I came, the first time, although that might have been when I visited my wife here, the Second Five-Year Plan was just being framed.

Mrs. Alva Myrdal: You visited here in Delhi in January, 1956, and at that time, perhaps you met Nehru. I do not know, but you certainly met Tarlok Singh.

Myrdal: Oh, yes.

Mrs. Alva Myrdal: And heard something about the Five-Year Plan.

Myrdal: Oh, yes, and met many of the members of the Planning Commission on various occasions in my wife's house.

Nanda: You found great enthusiasm for planned development and...

Myrdal: At that time, yes. You know, of course, that the First Plan was considered a success partly because you had good luck. I remember I talked with Eric da' Costa and he said: "Money is no question here. You can just expand currency."

Nanda: A strange way of putting things.

Myrdal: Strange, yes. At that time, when the Second Plan was formulated, there was a great optimism here, which is seen in the Plan. It was during the Second Plan that the first financial difficulties arose.

Nanda: I think the Second Plan also

went very well for the first couple of years.

Myrdal: Yes, that is right.

Nanda: The difficulties arose later with the foreign exchange reserves and so on.

Myrdal: That is right. One of my great friends here, who was near Nehru in many ways, and from whom I probably got much of my general feeling for Nehru, was Prof. Mahalanobis, who is dead now, and who made the frame of the Second Plan.

Nanda: What was his specific contribution?

Myrdal: Well, his specific contribution, of course, was the framing of the Second Five-Year Plan.

Nanda: The statistical part of it?

Myrdal: No, the whole. He wrote the framework for it. He was the one who insisted that you should go into steel and into these very important investments in heavy industry, but also the man who pressed forward the compromise with a Gandhian idea, that you should protect the consumption industries from becoming rationalised, mechanised and capital-intensive. He did that very much through his influence on Nehru. He wrote letters to him and he saw him and, as you know, he was an unofficial member of the Planning Commission.

Nanda: I think Mr. Nehru had very great regard for him.

Myrdal: Yes. Sometimes Nehru lost out, however, against, what Mahalanobis called, the "bureaucracy."

Nanda: Did you have any close contact with what is called "bureaucracy" at that time?

Myrdal: Well, I met most of the high officials.

Nanda: How did they impress you?

Myrdal: Well, first of course, just to be frank, I do not know of any country-and I do not exclude my own country-where you have such a highly educated, cultured group of persons who follow the world's affairs, as some of your highest officials here of the old Indian Civil Service. There is no question about that. And, generally speaking, this is a very big country where you can say, of course, that most people are illiterate or cannot speak, but when you have a talk with these officials it is on the highest intellectual level. Another thing is that traditionally they were not very mobile in their minds. They were not for making big changes. I used to say that the underdeveloped countries are inheriting much from the colonial time, and not only bad things, which is natural. And the Indians inherited at the time of independence, and have preserved it even now to a large extent,

an incorrupt, honest and stable civil service at the top and a rather stagnant economy. While the poor Philippines, they inherited a lively, developing country with an absolutely free press but thoroughly corrupted from the top down. Well, now you see what has happened to the Philippines under a dictatorship. There is no free press any longer.

Well, of course, to judge Nehru, if you go through his earlier books, written before independence, you find him criticising this Indian Civil Service very harshly and promising that here there would be an absolute change in the whole spirit of that civil service and in the whole mechanism of using it. The one thing which you "nationalised," so to speak, was the Indian Civil Service.

Nehru certainly had good political reasons for it because the main problem, when I think of all the horrors of Partition with those killings, stealing and all that, was to consolidate the country. So he needed that civil service. I think the Indian Civil Service in the beginning, at the time of independence, played a very large and important role; but his earlier criticism was also full of importance and rationality, and that, of course, was not followed up. You did not find Nehru coming in and really doing the things with the civil service which he had written about in the Discovery of India. That was left and that was hardly ever discussed.

Nanda: But the criticism was against the civil service as an instrument of colonial rule.

Myrdal: Not only that ...

Nanda: No, the point was he would not know how they would behave after the British departed.

Myrdal: Not only that, but I mean the whole spirit of it, the way they were operating, certainly. If you look up his books, you will find very harsh criticism, and that he did not follow up. . He was rather happy to have that civil service keeping the country together, and making all these important developments possible which, during the first and happy ten years were made here. I mean in the first hand, the Constitution. Of course, the civil service did not make the Constitution, but nevertheless it meant much to consolidate the new country, to have all these people around. Moreover, in the starting of the Planning Commission, in the drafting of a lot of legislation at that time, for instance the Hindu Marriage Law, where incidentally Nehru was fighting for once against the opposition. There he really took it up, and I should have liked him to have been the same fighting man on many other issues. This is my little criticism, if you understand what I mean.

Nanda: I understand.

Mrs. Alva Myrdal: You are a different person. People are different. You would fight, you also write books, he did other things.

Nanda: Where you mean he was, should

I say, compromising, were the areas in ...

Myrdal: Let us be clear about that. I do not mean that Nehru was a compromiser. He was not like a cheap politician compromising altogether.

Nanda: You mean areas where he did not sufficiently and vigorously pursue any particular political policy.

Myrdal: That was, I think out of respect for democracy. He had the feeling that things which should be done in India, should be done with a fair unanimity of people from all the regions and all the classes. I did not accuse him of being a cheap compromiser which you have plenty of in politics, not at all. No, he was above the battle, but did not want to press his opinion. That is, when I say he was an exaggerated democrat, I mean it is quite a different thing. When he made compromises that was because this was obviously how people felt, and he was not the one who was going to press upon them. He wanted them first converted to his ideals. I think, this superiority, democratic attitude, which I do not think I have found anywhere in the world, played a tremendous role. He was a real Kashmiri Brahmin, I mean in the most holy sense, who was wanting to express his opinions and argue them, which he did in all these cases where, I think, he was not strong enough. He argued them.

Nanda: He had tremendous respect for parliament.

Myrdal: Yes.

Nanda: And even when the opposition was a very small group, and could not at all outvote him, he went to a great length in explaining his case. In fact, he was speaking to the country and not to the opposition parties alone.

Myrdal: Yes, but I think there also you have another thing. There I understand his sense for democracy, that he wanted to base firmly in the people of India, parliamentarianism, because he was so against dictatorial rule. There he really was holding up parliament. Nobody has given parliament such a role as he. I think that he made really a great contribution. Whatever you have now as an orderly parliamentary government, it is because of Nehru.

Nanda: You mean he built up an institution which would be serving us for a long time to come.

Myrdal: That is right.

Nanda: Now, is there any other country, Prof. Myrdal, where you think parliamentary institutions have been planted in this way and have succeeded, with your experience?

Myrdal: Well, we know that poor Pakistan did not succeed in getting a constitution.

Nanda: No, they were a non-starter.

Myrdal: Yes, non-starter. Well, Ceylonese, of course, have had a parliamentary government but they have not been very successful. In one sense, I think Ceylon has suffered from an opposite illness. While under Nehru's influence, general ideals and principles meant a tremendous lot, sometimes leading to the feeling for an outsider that they were not serious because they were not being carried out. In Ceylon there was nothing of that. Anybody speaking the Indian language or Nehru's language in Ceylon would just be laughed at. There is a big difference in psychology and ideology. They have been in great difficulties and they are in difficulties now. My wife was Ambassador in Ceylon too, you know, and I visited it very often for my study.

No, I do not know of any country. Well, you might go back to, perhaps, the United States. After all the United States got its independence after a revolution; they set up a constitution which is still in force and the two Houses, the Senate and the House of Representatives have operated from the beginning. I mean you can criticize much how they operated, but nevertheless they established a stable system of democratic rule in United States. I do not know of any other example, when I now think over it, where a country starting out without having a democratic basis for its government, has succeeded to stabilise it as Nehru succeeded together with other

Indians. I mean India succeeded here even more than the United States. I think that is the only example, and that is very natural. Therefore, it is natural that you in India very often quote, and refer to the American Revolution and how they established a democratic system. Is that right? You find that everywhere in the press.

Nanda: That is true, but the Americans had some advantage at the end of the 18th century, in that they were not subject to external pressure or economic difficulties and foreign exchange crisis and things like that.

Myrdal: That is right.

Mrs. Alva Myrdal: Economically it was the opposite.

Nanda: Yes, economically it was the opposite.

Mrs. Alva Myrdal: Land of plenty.

Nanda: And the expectations of the mass of people in America were not there, in that sense.

Myrdal: And on the other hand they did not ...

Mrs. Alva Myrdal: They killed their indigenous people, that is the Indians.

Myrdal: On the other hand they did not have, what you had, an inherited stable civil service

and they have not got it yet, because of the spoils-system and other developments. They have not got yet that civil service which the Indians on becoming independent inherited and had to keep, even if you should now need to change it. I am also not only critical.

Nanda: But the other point you probably will agree is, that they did not have the leadership of the kind we had, and we were lucky in getting, say a man like Nehru for seventeen years who could appeal to all parts of the country.

Myrdal: Well, you know there I would say that America was also very lucky; they had Jefferson, they had Washington and they had Franklin. You know they really had great people in the beginning. Otherwise they would never have succeeded in founding a democratic country and having a constitution.

Nanda: So, it would seem that for a democratic government, paradoxical as it may seem, eminent individuals with democratic leanings, but great power, are necessary. They may not use the power deliberately.

Myrdal: Those Americans used their power. You knew they were Presidents and they were very firm. I think the only thing which I say here is: Nehru, of course, was a tremendously great man, absolutely on par with these great Americans I have mentioned; but Nehru did not use his powers as they did. They were fighting sometimes between themselves.

Nanda: But the dangers of using power at the end of the 18th century were not so great in America as they were in India, because once Nehru had used those powers, then the tremendous respect for democratic government and parliamentary institutions which he wanted to infuse would have not been there.

Myrdal: Yes, you might be right.

Mrs. Alva Myrdal: Curiously enough, when we think of it, these leaders both in the United States and Mr. Nehru here, were also aristocrats and intellectuals combined.

Myrdal: These Americans were people who were corresponding with great philosophers and statesmen in Europe at that time. They were quite the cream of society.

Nanda: Well, do you agree that an intellectual in politics is useful on certain occasions in history?

Myrdal: I agree. When Mrs. Indira Gandhi was in Stockholm last year and there was a big dinner for her, I was sitting just a little while with her and then I said: "You are India's hope, perhaps the last hope." And then she looked very sad. You know she always looks a little sad. I mean she is not a very happy girl. And then she said: "You should know what difficulties I am up to." That is what she said, and I think I understand that.

Nanda: I think if you see the thing in the historical perspective, and if you see it in the perspective of certain ideals, then running a country of this size is not easy, but if you have no scruples about ideals, and you do not look ten or twenty years ahead, then the task may seem easy. Just as Yahya Khan did in Pakistan. He thought it was so easy.

Myrdal: But let me ask you a question which is worrying me and of which I do not know the answer and which you might know. What has happened here, of course, is that corruption has spread among politicians, and it has a tendency to spread downwards and that is to me a very dangerous thing. There are silly American economists who say that this is getting a cumbersome administration to run smoothly. In fact, it is just the opposite. It is very much because of this that the administration is not running well, because the way of getting bribe from the lowest to the highest is to cause delay. So, this is very cumbersome.

Now, I am absolutely sure that Mr. Nehru was aware of this development. We know furthermore that at one point, among others, my friend C.D. Deshmukh and others raised the issue publicly and asked Mr. Nehru to really use a hard hand to stamp out corruption in high places because otherwise it was not possible to get along. You know also that Nehru's reaction was, that when everybody was speaking about corruption it was very bad, because everybody believed that everything was corrupt and why should not he be corrupt too when all the others

were. This was his answer, but he did not do anything about it.

Now, I have been wondering very much about a personal question here: why Nehru did not come out strongly against corruption in high places? There are various tentative answers; you could say that he was aware **that** too many of his closest collaborators, even in the government, would have to be lost. This is one explanation. I do not think that is enough. Another explanation is that he was so aristocratic, he was so way above this thing that he did not catch it, did not understand it - I am just thinking tentatively - or perhaps he thought that these poor people now they had power, should have something for it; in other words a sort of generosity towards them. But simply I do not understand why Nehru, who had the intellectual capacity to understand how damaging corruption was for everything in India, did not take stronger measures. This is a question which I have not solved.

Mrs. Alva Myrdal: But it was the same with Roosevelt in the United States. We have made the same criticism. He was so radical and so supreme and had such great power, he did not get at it.

Myrdal: He was also an aristocrat, you know; but in Roosevelt's case he played with the dirty machine but in Nehru's case I just do not understand it.

Nanda: I don't think that Nehru played with the dirty machines in that sense because his position was completely invulnerable, personally. So, he did not depend on anyone. That is quite obvious to me. The other thing is that he hated the whole thing, detested the whole thing. He just would not tolerate something if he was sure, but the difficulty then and now is how to distinguish charges and counter-charges from each other. Well, I have no experience, because I have not dealt with this problem directly, first hand and have no idea at all, but I imagine that it is very difficult to be sure that even an honest man is not maligned. There are newspapers in this country who are prepared to publish anything against anybody. Even if Gandhi was here - I mean Mahatma Gandhi - you could see something published against him which was completely false.

Myrdal: Yes, but then it should have been in the interest even of that man that things were laid on the table and became very clear.

Nanda: That is true, but the whole point is that there are probably so many charges and counter-charges and false accusations and true accusations, that the man at the top finds it very difficult to be sure as to what he should do, because even the instrument through which he makes enquiries may be tainted.

Myrdal: But, of course, here you had a man whom Mr. Nehru had the highest respect for, Deshmukh, who came with strong words and made proposals.

Nanda: Well, I have no personal knowledge of what happened at that time in that context.

Myrdal: It could be well worth to look into.

Nanda: Yes, but the whole point, it seems to me, is that Nehru thought that his own personal example was there. Here was a man who was ascetic almost, who wanted no money for himself, who wanted nothing for himself as such, and he may have thought that his example would be enough. Moreover, I think the pressure of work as Prime Minister and head of a political party, day in, day out, must have taken up so much of his energy that there might be a natural distaste for him to be diverted into these things.

Myrdal: Yes, which he disliked anyhow.

Nanda: I do not know, but it seems to me, it may be something like that. The amount of time you can give to a particular problem as a Prime Minister depends upon what is happening...

Myrdal: Yes, that is right. I used to say that every government, including a government in a rich country like Sweden, is living in a permanent crisis; there are emergencies, there are appointments which must be made; there are so many small things which must be settled, that you never get time to speak about the essential things. A minister - I was a minister,

you know, long ago; it is a generation gap between my wife and myself in this respect-and I remember that if you had a big point, you really wanted to discuss, at the very end of the discussion about who should be the Bishop, and who should be appointed to that, and so on, when I came with my question that we should talk about an important issue, everybody looked at the watch; they had appointments, you know. This is the way in which countries are ruled and still more, of course, in a country like India which is so big and has such great difficulties. The members of government never get the time to discuss essential, big issues. Is it not right? That I think must be remembered when you are going to discuss the policy of a country.

Nanda: Thank you very much.

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